

Feb 28, 2023,

Greetings to Co-chairs: Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, and the Ranking and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee.

My name is Ramon Garcia, a Parent Advocate with ConnCAN, and a resident of Hartford, Connecticut. And today I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 1095 -An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

All youth in our schools deserve care, support, and the right to a good education. And having police in schools runs counter to this. The data clearly shows how students of color are disproportionately arrested at much higher rates than other students, and also more likely to be arrested in schools with School Resource Officers than in schools without them.

Having police officers in schools puts our kids that much closer on a path of criminalization. For something so typical of youth such as getting into a schoolyard scuffle or acting out because of some underlying issues, the response is to put them in handcuffs and whisk them away in a police cruiser directly from school to a cage.

Many youth, especially from communities of color are suffering from many societal ills. Having experienced the juvenile justice system as a kid I was imprisoned with other youths from all over Connecticut. From our personal stories I noticed we experienced many of the same issues such as: poverty, drugs, single-parent homes and violence. How can we expect a child not to be affected by these issues they endure on a daily basis?!

A dear friend and community leader working with youth here in the city of Hartford would often state that " many of the youth act hard because they're hurt, and they just really need a hug."

So kids are not in need of: handcuffs, pepper spray, jail cells and court dockets! Rather they're in dire need of: support, counseling, resources, and most importantly love! So for the sake of our youth, I humbly ask you to support Senate Bill 1095 and keep police out of our schools. Thank you all very much for your time!

Respectfully, Ramon Garcia

